



Charles Wesley's Hark, the Herald Angels Sing is so familiar that we can hardly imagine the text sung to any other tune. But it was over a century after it was written before organist William Cummings was inspired to adapt a chorus from Mendelssohn's Festgesang—a cantata written to celebrate Gutenberg's invention of the movable press—to fit Wesley's words. Oddly enough, Mendelssohn himself wrote that the tune would “never do to sacred words.”

This jubilant seasonal praise chorus holds some rhythmical and harmonic surprises. For example, the syncopated pattern in the second melodic unit (mm. 18-24) goes by quickly and includes a phrase that begins unexpectedly on the last half of beat four (mm. 18, 22, etc.). You may need to practice these spots using numbers to count out the eighth notes to nail the rhythm into place. In addition, be alert to abruptly shifting harmony: F major to A<sup>b</sup> major, mm. 24-25; and B<sup>b</sup> major to D major in mm. 36-37.

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